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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Relations with the Global Environment Facility

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its decision 14/COP.1, the Conference of the Parties (COP), welcomed the excellent cooperation existing between the UNCCD secretariat and the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as well as the reciprocal representation in meetings of the Convention and those of the GEF. At its second session, the COP invited the GEF to actively support the activities of the Global Mechanism, which plays an important role in facilitating the mobilization of resources to support the UNCCD implementation (decision 18/COP.2). Furthermore, the First GEF Assembly, held in New Delhi, India in April 1998, adopted the New Delhi Statement, which in its paragraph 8 called on the GEF, in consultation with the secretariat of the UNCCD, to seek to better define the linkages between land degradation, particularly desertification and deforestation, and its focal areas and to increase GEF support for land degradation activities as they relate to the GEF focal areas.

2. In response to policy guidance given by the COP and the GEF Assembly and Council, both the UNCCD secretariat and the GEF secretariat have initiated consultations to promote collaborative activities.

3. This report presents an overview of the relation between the UNCCD and the GEF and the GEF involvement in areas where mutual interests between the two exist.

II. COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE UNCCD SECRETARIAT AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY SECRETARIAT

4. The UNCCD secretariat and the GEF secretariat have been collaborating through reciprocal representation at their respective governing bodies. The UNCCD secretariat invites the GEF secretariat to attend sessions of the Conference of the Parties and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) as well as other UNCCD related meetings, including those held at the regional level. The GEF secretariat invites the UNCCD secretariat to be represented at meetings of the GEF Council, the GEF Assembly, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and other relevant meetings. The secretariats keep each other informed of salient issues that are of common interest through the exchange of documents and reports and by sharing information by electronic means. Both secretariats maintain close contact to facilitate mutual collaboration.

5. It has been a practice for both secretariats to organize side-events and/or exhibits at the UNCCD COP or the GEF Assembly for purposes of outreach to common stakeholders. The UNCCD was invited, for example, to organize a side-event during the First GEF Assembly; in response, the UNCCD in collaboration with the GEF and its implementing agencies, held a workshop on "Land Degradation and Its Multiple Implications for the Global Environment" in New Delhi on 2 April 1999. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, members of the GEF/STAP, and the project manager of the GEF/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) land degradation project in the Sudan, among others, held panel discussions during the New Delhi Assembly.

interacted with participants and exchanged views on a variety of issues concerning desertification control and GEF focal areas.

6. A meeting of both secretariats was held in Washington in July 1998, specifically to discuss joint activities to respond to policy guidance from their respective governing bodies. It was proposed that a memorandum of cooperation be concluded between the two secretariats, and this is still under consideration. It was also proposed that a joint report on a study on interlinkages between land degradation and GEF focal areas be prepared, and that the report be presented at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD. The GEF and its implementing agencies organized exhibitions on their projects and activities concerning land degradation during UNCCD COP 2. The GEF secretariat and the GEF/STAP also organized side-events to demonstrate GEF projects and the significance of controlling desertification and land degradation in tackling global environment issues, also during the second session of the COP.

III. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK THAT DEFINES THE RELATION BETWEEN THE UNCCD AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

7. Article 20, paragraph 2(b) of the UNCCD stipulates that "developed country Parties... undertake to promote the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the Global Environment Facility of the agreed incremental costs of those activities concerning desertification that relate to its four focal areas, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Instrument establishing the Global Environment Facility."

8. Moreover, the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility states in paragraph 2 that the GEF shall operate in the areas of climate change, biological diversity, international waters, and ozone layer depletion, and provides in the following paragraph 3 that "the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, as they relate to the four focal areas shall be eligible for funding."

IV. INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN LAND DEGRADATION AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY FOCAL AREAS

9. The GEF secretariat and the GEF/STAP have been undertaking various activities and have prepared a number of documents, in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat, pursuant to the GEF Council policy guidance, with a view to clarifying further the GEF framework and modalities to support desertification and land degradation control activities.

10. In response to a call made by the GEF Council in April 1996, the GEF/STAP organized an Expert Group Workshop on Land Degradation in Dakar, Senegal, in September 1996, to define more clearly the global benefits of activities to combat land degradation. At the workshop, participants examined the role, mandate and

operations of the GEF, and analysed scientific and technical interactions between land degradation and climate change, biodiversity and international waters. Some case studies were also presented to document the environmental and socio-economic impacts of land degradation and the multiple benefits of controlling land degradation.

11. The Dakar workshop pinpointed a set of recommendations to clarify the modalities for formulating GEF eligible projects to address land degradation. The workshop underlined, for instance, the need to develop scientific methodologies to assess incremental costs, to translate the cost of land degradation and water resources into economic and ecological terms and to provide explicit project guidelines which elaborate in a step-by-step manner how local groups, non-governmental organizations, researchers and governments can propose new projects for GEF funding.

12. The GEF secretariat published a booklet entitled *A Framework for GEF Activities Concerning Land Degradation* in 1995. The framework provides operational criteria and guidelines and eligibility criteria for land degradation related activities. It also provides a solid basis for GEF to support activities to combat land degradation, and stresses the potential of the GEF in creating synergies between local, national and global benefits, through dealing with the interface between land degradation and the GEF focal areas.

13. Following the 1996 Dakar workshop, the GEF secretariat submitted a paper entitled "Follow-up Action to the STAP Workshop on Land Degradation", for consideration by the GEF Council in April 1997. This paper presented modalities for integrating land degradation components into GEF operational programmes. Building upon the GEF operational strategy, the operational programmes, which were concluded and published in February 1997, address land degradation in most of the operational programmes and include operational programme 1, specifically devoted to arid and semi-arid ecosystems.

14. With a view to assisting the GEF secretariat in clarifying issues of carbon sequestration and while exploring the possibility of developing a new operational programme in this area, the STAP organized a brainstorming session on carbon sequestration, in June 1998. This session explored and elucidated modalities for sequestrating carbon through planting trees and vegetation with a view to rehabilitating degraded land areas. Socio-economic as well as environmental benefits which arise from such activities were extensively discussed.

15. The GEF Council, at its thirteenth meeting, held in Washington DC in May 1999, confirmed its request that the GEF secretariat, in consultation with the UNCCD secretariat, prepare for Council review at its meeting in December 1999, a paper defining the interlinkages between land degradation and the GEF focal areas.

16. The GEF/STAP continued its work on interlinkages between land degradation and its four focal areas by organizing a Workshop on Land Degradation Interlinkages in Bologna, Italy, in mid-June 1999, taking into account the developments after the 1996 Dakar workshop. The Bologna workshop clearly identified interlinkages between land degradation and climate change, biodiversity and international waters. The workshop examined issues of interlinkages from a perspective which takes into account new developments in the GEF and other environmental conventions. The workshop endorsed a set of findings of the 1996 Dakar workshop on interlinkages that exist between land degradation and GEF focal areas. The report of the workshop in Bologna were presented to the third meeting of the STAP, held in Paris in June and July 1999.

17. A timetable for the preparation of the joint UNCCD/GEF paper on interlinkages between land degradation and the GEF focal areas has already been agreed upon between the GEF secretariat and the UNCCD secretariat. According to this schedule, the joint UNCCD/GEF paper will be prepared, finalized and presented at a joint UNCCD/GEF workshop during COP 3 in Recife, Brazil in November 1999. The paper will be refined and enriched through the outcome of COP 3, and be presented to the GEF Council in December 1999.

18. It has been observed that, in spite of the numerous studies and communications that have clearly elucidated the interlinkages that exist between land degradation and the focal areas of the GEF, UNCCD stakeholders still have difficulty in obtaining GEF resources to finance activities initiated in the UNCCD process. This arises from, among others, the problems of clearly defining "interlinkages", "incremental cost" and "global benefits", with respect to desertification and land degradation control activities, as required by GEF criteria.

V. GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY PORTFOLIO IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVITIES THAT ADDRESS LAND DEGRADATION

19. The Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF stated at COP 2 in December 1998, that a total of US$ 350 million in GEF funds, and additional co-financing of more than twice that amount, are addressing land degradation issues. He also referred to a set of over 30 pipeline projects worth US$ 150 million addressing land degradation. The signing ceremony of the project entitled "Biological diversity conservation through participatory rehabilitation of the degraded lands of the arid and semi-arid transboundary areas of Mauritania and Senegal", was held on 8 December 1998, during COP 2, presided over by the President of Senegal.

20. At the workshop organized by the GEF secretariat as a side-event during COP 2, substantive achievements made by the GEF funded project implemented in the Sudan entitled "Community-based rangeland rehabilitation for carbon sequestration" were presented. The GEF also circulated a document during COP 2 entitled "Fact sheets on the GEF's Land Degradation Project: December 1998." It gives an overviews of a variety of projects targeting land degradation.

21. The level of GEF resource flows in support of activities to counter land degradation has been a concern of the GEF Council. At its meeting in May 1999, the Council expressed its disappointment at the lack of projects on land degradation in the work programme submitted for its consideration and approval. Consequently, the Council urged the implementing agencies to accelerate the preparation of land degradation projects and their inclusion in future work programmes. At the same meeting, the Council also requested the GEF secretariat, in consultation with its implementing agencies and the UNCCD secretariat, to prepare for the next Council meeting, information on the constraints and challenges for addressing land degradation and its linkages to sustainable development. It noted that this information should include an action plan and timetable for increasing GEF support for land degradation activities as they relate to the GEF focal areas and that such support should be geographically broad-based.

VI. INITIATIVES TO INCREASE THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY'S SUPPORT TO LAND DEGRADATION RELATED ACTIVITIES

22. The executive heads of GEF implementing agencies, who include the President of the World Bank, the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), together with the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF, met on 11 March 1999, and agreed to prepare for the launching of a new GEF initiative entitled "Land and Water Initiative for Africa's Sustainable Development." Under this initiative, it is proposed that land conservation and soil fertility enhancement as well as water resource management will be dealt with in a comprehensive manner. The GEF secretariat and the STAP organized a brainstorming session on this matter on 17 June 1999 following the Bologna workshop and exchanged views on possible modalities for undertaking such an initiative effectively.

23. The World Bank has been steering the process for increasing its support to activities to address land degradation. In this respect, a high-level round table was organized by the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network (ESSD) of the World Bank in collaboration with the World Bank Institute in Washington DC, on 15-16 June 1999. The President and Vice-President of the World Bank as well as the heads and senior officials of other international organizations and prominent experts gathered and reviewed the issues of desertification and land degradation and the World Bank's activities and explored ways and means of increasing the World Bank's support in these areas.

24. The UNCCD also collaborates with the UNDP, which plays an important role as one of the GEF implementing agencies. The UNCCD and the UNDP organized a mini-workshop in New York, in March 1999, to deliberate on a cooperation framework for supporting UNCCD implementation. UNDP has agreed to extend its support, particularly through its field offices, to facilitate the UNCCD implementation at the national level.

25. UNEP and the UNCCD secretariat have also been developing cooperation to support the UNCCD implementation process. UNEP has been closely following the development and implementation of the UNCCD regional annexes and regional action programmes. UNEP has been supporting the UNCCD regional coordination units for both Latin America and the Carribean, and Africa. The two regional coordination units, based respectively at the UNEP regional office in Mexico City, Mexico and in the African Development Bank, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, are receiving support from UNEP. A similar arrangement is also under consideration for the proposed regional coordination unit for Asia. UNDP has agreed to provide support for the activities of the regional coordination unit in Mexico. It has been requested to consider supporting the two other regional coordination units.

VII. THE WAY FORWARD TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY AND THE UNCCD

26. While a number of collaborative activities have been emerging between the GEF, the GEF implementing agencies and the UNCCD, the following suggestions deserve further examination with a view to enhancing such collaboration.

A. Enabling activities

27. The UNCCD facilitates the formulation and implementation of national policy on issues of desertification through a bottom-up approach and community-driven activities. The UNCCD, through its voluntary fund, provides resources to affected countries, through UNCCD national focal points, to undertake the national process for formulating and implementing national action programmes and preparing national reports on the UNCCD implementation. Such a policy framework lays down a basis for promoting a variety of field projects in a successful manner, some of which donor countries and agencies have been supporting. Despite the undeniable importance of supporting national policy formulation and implementation processes as well as capacity-building, so far the UNCCD has also been providing affected countries with catalytic financial and technical assistance.

28. It would be worthwhile to consider promoting coordination of activities at the national level which relate to enabling activities that are being funded by the GEF for implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The possibility of accessing funds from the GEF under biodiversity enabling activities to carry out national policy formulation and implementation processes which relate to the UNCCD should be explored. The necessary information must be provided by both the GEF and UNCCD secretariats on this matter and both secretariats need to conduct further consultations to explore such possibilities and reach agreement. The role of implementing agencies, particularly the UNDP, would be important in interacting with governments at the national level.

B. Small grant programme and medium-size projects

29. Fully fledged GEF projects take a long time for preparation and approval. Many issues associated with land degradation and desertification are neither yet fully quantified nor conceptualized in a manner that qualifies proposals for GEF funding. In light of the recognized effectiveness of the community-driven and bottom-up approach advocated by the UNCCD in combating desertification and land degradation, small grants and medium-size projects are deemed very useful for undertaking pilot projects. This is demonstrable especially in areas where multiple benefits can be obtained from controlling land degradation and desertification and rehabilitating degraded lands. Such projects can include, for example, carbon sequestration projects which promote reforestation, revegetation and conservation of dryland biodiversity. The implementing agencies, particularly the UNDP, need to play a crucial role in providing stakeholders with the necessary information and assisting them in submitting proposals for such projects or similar projects in a way that satisfies the requirements of the GEF. The small grants programme, with a catalytic amount of resources, can provide non-governmental and community-based organizations with strong motivations to initiate small-scale projects on land degradation and desertification at the communal level. This will be one of the areas where more effort needs to be made and greater benefits can be expected.

C. Investment programmes

30. Once stakeholders reach the point where they can demonstrate the global benefits of taking action to control land degradation and rehabilite degraded lands, the World Bank, and in some cases the UNDP and UNEP, with their long-standing experience and expertise, are expected to respond proactively to stakeholders in supporting the development of investment projects with project development funds. While investment projects are more complex, intervention in land management offers an inducement to restore soil fertility and productivity in the long term. For example, reforestation in marginal degraded lands or agroforestry in drylands can be economically viable, especially where external resources can catalyse the mobilization of support to such activities.

D. Country dialogues and project formulation workshops

31. It will be useful to consider organizing country dialogues and project formulation workshops focusing on land degradation issues. Such workshops may be deemed cost-effective if they are held back-to-back with UNCCD-related meetings at the national or regional level. Prototype projects which have been implemented or that are in the pipeline can be referred to in order to demonstrate ways and means of formulating land degradation projects eligible for GEF funding. The role of the three implementing agencies needs to be clearly explained to stakeholders so as to assist them in identifying the suitable agency to seek GEF assistance, depending on the nature of the proposed projects. Such country dialogues or project formulation workshops are critical to developing partnerships with organizations,

especially non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the private sector, to promote a bottom-up approach.

E. Transboundary, subregional and regional activities

32. The UNCCD has a unique feature of promoting regional cooperation, as exemplified by the regional implementation annexes of the Convention as well as the ongoing process of developing regional action programmes. Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have been developing their own action programmes composed of six to seven themes, among others, desertification monitoring and assessment, agroforestry and soil conservation, and rangeland management. Implementing agencies are expected to look into the possibility of supporting these activities in the light of the multiple benefits which can be shared on a wide scale at the regional level. These regional programmes are indeed useful as desertification and land degradation have transboundary impacts for which concerted action is required.

F. Targeted research

33. One of the constraints to increasing the involvement of the GEF in activities to combat desertification and land degradation is the limited information and input of research and development in areas of land degradation, particularly desertification control. The GEF, through the targeted research activity of the STAP can play a leading role in clarifying scientific and technical issues associated with activities to control desertification and land degradation and rehabilitate degraded lands. The STAP can also play an important role in collecting data and information through developing its networks with the scientific community worldwide.

34. It will be beneficial to stakeholders if the GEF and the UNCCD, through the STAP and the CST, can be an information clearing-house or information exchange forum, particularly on scientific and technical matters concerning land degradation and desertification control activities, in the absence of such a mechanism elsewhere. There are, for instance, emerging technologies for growing vegetation in drylands and for developing species which grow in areas with limited precipitation. Such information can be exchanged even within the existing structure of the UNCCD and the GEF to some extent as is done in the related forums of the UNFCCC and the CBD.

G. Streamlining the procedures for project proposals relating to land degradation

35. It is advisable to perceive land degradation issues from a holistic viewpoint which takes into account a variety of socio-economic and environmental aspects. In this context, it is frequently mentioned that the application of concepts such as incremental costs or global benefits is not an easy task as they need to be quantified or specified in order to make projects eligible under the GEF. The workshop on incremental cost organized by the GEF and the International Institute

for Environment and Development in London, 25-26 March 1999 clarified this matter to some extent, but at the same time the need to simplify the incremental cost analysis procedures instead of further complicating the matter was pointed out.

H. Comprehensive approach

36. For the same reason, as pinpointed at the Bologna workshop, there is a need to look at land degradation projects from a perspective that goes beyond a simplistic cost-benefit analysis. One of the pivotal principles guiding the operation of the GEF is a cost-benefit analysis. However, in assessing the cost and benefits of the proposed projects, one should extend the scope of the analysis to encompass other socio-economic and environmental issues. The analysis also needs to be developed in a way that will promote activities to address desertification and land degradation issues effectively, multiply benefits to be shared widely and create synergies at communal, local, national, regional and global levels.

I. Roster of experts and inventories of institutions

37. The CST maintains its roster of experts which can be referred to when the GEF roster of experts is consulted. The CST has also been undertaking, through a consortium led by UNEP, a survey and evaluation of existing networks and agencies which deal with desertification issues. The outcome, even provisional, may be useful when the STAP develops its network of scientists who deal with desertification issues. The complementarity can be explored between the CST and the STAP on these matters.

J. Benchmarks and indicators

38. The CST has been working to develop and examine benchmarks and indicators to assess desertification and the UNCCD implementation. When the STAP addresses issues of indicators in the overall context of the GEF operation, the work of the CST can be useful in some instances. Exchanges of information between the two scientific bodies of the UNCCD and the GEF can be promoted through mutual representation of both secretariat staff members, and other modalities which will foster close collaboration between the two institutions.